

November 21, 2004

Application: 10/077,732

Applicant: Nikolich

Art Unit: 3651

Examiner: G. Crawford

Claim 13. (currently amended) A method for distributing a plurality of articles of different kinds, comprising the steps,

providing a storage area and a cart in the storage area,
the storage cart having a plurality of bins for supporting and identifying said articles,

providing a plurality of receiver areas at substantial distances from the storage areas and the receiver areas being adapted to be occupied by receivers capable of receiving said articles,

providing a plurality of supply carts at distributed locations, the supply carts having bins respectively identical with the bins in the storage cart and having indicia identifying said articles put therein,

the supply carts being open and thereby enabling any person to withdraw articles therefrom and transport them to the receiver area,

providing supplemental panels having manually actuated means for registering articles placed in and withdrawn from the supply bins,

manually actuating the registering means, and

~~utilizing the computer means to register the difference in numbers of articles in the storage cart and the supply cart.~~

utilizing a computer means to register the difference in the predetermined full stocking level of the supply bin and the number of articles in the supply bin, and

utilizing a computer means to register the difference in the said difference and the number of articles in its respective storage bin.

Claim 14. (currently amended) A method according to ~~claim~~ Claim 13, and including the steps, maintaining the supply cart in open condition indefinitely, withdrawing articles continuously throughout a predetermined overall period, independently of operation of other steps, and restocking articles from the storage cart through the supply cart, independently of other steps.

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Claim 15. (previously presented) A method according to Claim 14 and including the steps of providing a single such storage cart, and a plurality of supply carts at locations at substantial distances from the storage cart and from each other, and

Utilizing each supply cart independently from each other for ~~transmitting~~
registering said signals to the storage cart. differences.

Claim 16. (previously presented) A method according to Claim 13 and

Providing a security camera and utilizing it for operably photographing the supply cart throughout said predetermined period of operation of the supply cart.

Claim 17. (Currently amended) Apparatus for use in distributing a plurality of articles of different kinds throughout a facility that has a central storage area, and a plurality of user areas distributed in the facility at substantial distances from the area, comprising,

a storage cart in the storage area having a plurality of storage bins for holding a corresponding number of said articles of different kinds,

~~the storage cart having labels individually identifying articles in the storage bins,~~

an open supply cart adjacent to each of the user areas and having supply bins for receiving and holding said articles, and the supply cart having labels individually identifying articles in the supply bins,

supplemental panels having push buttons operably associated with the ~~storage~~
supply bins,

the apparatus including a computer for registering signals from the push buttons,

the computer being operably associated with each supply cart, and operable in response to actuation of the push buttons in the respective supplemental panel for recording the withdrawing of articles from and the placing of articles in the supply cart
bins,

and including means for providing alert signal in response to the presence of hazardous materials in the articles.

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Claim 32. (previously presented) A method according to Claim 13, and including the steps, utilizing a bar code reader as an auxiliary means of registering articles placed in and withdrawn from the bins.

Claim 33. (previously presented) A method according to Claim 13, and including the steps, utilizing a radio-frequency (RF) identification reader as an auxiliary means of requesting articles placed in and withdrawn from the bins.

Claim 34. (previously presented) A method according to Claim 13, and including the steps, utilizing an infrared (IR) reader as an auxiliary means of requesting articles placed in and withdrawn from the bins.

Claim 35. (previously presented) A method according to Claim 13, and including the steps, utilizing an auxiliary keypad as an auxiliary means of requesting articles placed in and withdrawn from the bins.

Claim 36. (Currently amended) A method according to Claim ~~35~~ 13, and including the steps, utilizing a bar code reader as an auxiliary means to identify users of the articles withdrawn.

Claim 37. (Currently amended) A method according to Claim ~~35~~ 13, and including the steps, utilizing a radio-frequency (RF) identification reader as an auxiliary means to identify users of the articles withdrawn.

Claim 38. (Currently amended) A method according to Claim ~~35~~ 13, and including the steps, utilizing an infrared (IR) reader as an auxiliary means to identify users of the articles withdrawn.

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Claim 39. (Currently amended) A method according to Claim ~~35~~ 13, and including the steps, utilizing an auxiliary keypad as an auxiliary means to identify users of the articles withdrawn.

Claim 40. (previously presented) A method according to Claim 13, and including the steps, submitting a charge event to a billing system when a user is identified and an article is withdrawn from a bin.

Claim 41. (previously presented) A method according to Claim 13, and including the steps, submitting an assignment event to a manufacturing management system when a user is identified and an article is withdrawn from a bin.